



# SHPO News

The State Historic Preservation Office

Michigan Historical Center

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARTS AND LIBRARIES

## More SHPO News for You!

*A substantial increase in our federal Historic Preservation Grant for this year makes it possible for us to provide additional funding to the Michigan Historic Preservation Network to expand our SHPO News section from two to four pages and bring you up-to-date on some of the most critical preservation issues.*

*Brian D. Conway*

*State Historic Preservation Officer*

We introduce two new regular features this issue. "Preservation Profile" will provide brief descriptions of recent projects with which the SHPO is involved, including preservation successes, challenges, and losses. SHPO architects Bryan Lijewski and Robbert McKay debut their "Building Doctor" column with advice from "Dr. Roof." This new regular feature is aimed at answering technical questions that are not building specific, but address more general preservation issues and concerns. Readers may submit questions to Dr. Roof by mail or email. In addition, we will highlight recent listings in the National Register of Historic Places, recently approved Michigan Historical Markers, tax credit assisted rehabilitation projects, and unusual section 106 cases.

If you feel there is an important matter that you want the SHPO to discuss in the SHPO News, please contact us. We will continue to make every effort to share the information that you need to be successful in preserving Michigan's historic resources.

### Fayette Building 3: Above and Below, Inside and Outside

*John R. Halsey*

*State Archaeologist*

A multidisciplinary field crew led by archaeologists John Halsey, Barbara Mead and Dean Anderson, and assisted by Robbert McKay of the State Historic Preservation Office, Tom Friggens, Brenda Laakso, Bruce Nail, Eric Dahlstrom of the Michigan Historical

Museum, and Stephen Stier of REConstruction, conducted four days of archaeological excavation in and around Building 3 at Fayette Historic Townsite (20DE19) on the Garden Peninsula in northern Lake Michigan.

The purpose of these excavations was to insure that proposed building repairs and restoration, particularly to the sill beams and stone foundations, would not damage significant archaeological deposits. Inside the structure, artifacts (all dating to the twentieth century)

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*The SHPO staff would like to introduce our new building doctor, Dr. Roof. Dr. Roof will provide answers to your most pressing questions regarding building maintenance and preservation. The goal is to provide information needed by professionals, homeowners, historic district commissions and others when they face these questions in the field.*

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Dear Dr. Roof:

I recently purchased a two-story commercial building. I plan on rehabilitating the entire structure with commercial rental space on the first floor and two apartments on the second floor. Some sections of the interior plaster on the brick walls need to be repaired. I thought I would just remove all of the plaster to expose the brick walls, since this seems to be the trend for historic interior spaces. Should I do it?

Sincerely,

Willy Expose

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Dear Willy:

Don't do it! First, you hit on an important point when you said that exposed brick walls are a trend. While this has been a popular treatment for a number of years, it is a relatively recent approach in the big scheme of things. For example, if your building was constructed at the turn of the century, those walls have been plastered for one hundred years. Why throw away all that history for a trendy treatment? It is difficult to go back once you remove all of the plaster. Second, just imagine all the work and mess ahead of you if you try to

# The Building Doctor



*The building doctors, Bryan Lijewski (left) and Robbert McKay (right).*

remove it. Remember that there is probably lead paint on those walls; do you want to create all that dust? The brick walls were never intended to be exposed, so you may have a lower quality brick, the mortar joints will not be tooled, there may be miscellaneous patches, and you may then have an additional problem of deteriorating mortar and brick dust to deal with. Third, don't conform! Buck the trend! Historic interior spaces offer a variety of amenities that tenants seek. High ceilings, tall windows, interior trim, and wood floors all add to the uniqueness of a historic space. Exposed brick walls might be something "cool" that tenants think they want, so downplay it and really focus on those other special elements of the space. Tell your potential tenants that because the original, historic plaster is still there, they

can do a really great interior paint color scheme to express their own distinctive taste or promote their business identity. Fourth, the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service simply will not accept wholesale removal of plaster as an appropriate treatment since it is not in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Specifically, plaster removal does not comply with Standards 2 and 5, which say that you should not remove historic materials that characterize a property, and that you should preserve distinctive finishes that characterize the property. If you are eligible to apply for a federal or state tax credit, you need to keep the plaster to get the credit.

Each situation is unique and there may be cases where severe plaster deterioration may require an evaluation to determine the best approach to keep the historic integrity of the space. Each project should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. While some interior spaces were never finished and always had exposed brick interior walls, most historic interiors had some form of plaster finish. For more information on this issue, refer to *Preservation Brief 18, 21 or 23*, or *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. If you need copies of any of these items I will mail you a copy.

The building doctor would be happy to answer your question. Please submit questions, comments, inquiries, etc. to the Building Doctor, State Historic Preservation Office, 717 W. Allegan St., Lansing, MI 48918-1800. I can also be reached by email: [preservation@sosmail.state.mi.us](mailto:preservation@sosmail.state.mi.us)

**BE HAPPY – GET PLASTERED!**

## Fayette Building 3

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found beneath the floorboards of the "kitchen" were plotted and a 5-foot-square unit excavated to bedrock. Outside, three 2.5-foot squares were excavated at intervals along the west foundation of the building. Unlike excavations at other buildings at Fayette, relatively few historic artifacts (other than the ubiquitous nails) were recovered. However, prehistoric artifacts such as projectile points, scrapers, ceramic sherds, flint chips, fish, bird, turtle and mammal bones were found to a depth of more than two feet, right down to bedrock, confirming the significance of the prehistoric occupation at Fayette. Most of the deposit represents a Middle Woodland fishing camp about 2000 years old, with artifacts including a copper fishhook, the second one found at the site, and fragmentary bone harpoons. Distinctive pottery specimens show that later occupations took place between AD 1000 and 1500.

The combined expertise of the participants present during this project energized all involved. The archaeologists saw firsthand the problems faced in restoring or just keeping a 125-year-old building standing. The architectural historians participated in the recovery of artifacts and information important to the interpretation of this particular structure. The historians obtained new information to incorporate into their on-site presentations concerning the site's history and prehistory. All agreed that this kind of multidisciplinary effort should be repeated.

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*The Beautiful-Bountiful-Michigan tile, created in 1984 for the Yes! Michigan campaign, is featured with permission from Pewabic Pottery of Detroit. Mary Chase Perry Stratton and Horace J. Caulkins founded Pewabic Pottery, known for its iridescent glazes and architectural tile work found in buildings throughout the United States. Pewabic Pottery is a National Historic Landmark. Rendering by Patrick Reed.*

For more information on any SHPO News item, contact the SHPO by phone at 517.373.1630, by e-mail at [preservation@sosmail.state.mi.us](mailto:preservation@sosmail.state.mi.us), or visit our web site at [www.sos.state.mi.us/history/preserve/preserve.html](http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/preserve/preserve.html).

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Preservation Field School Held at Fayette

SHPO Historical Architect Robbert McKay instructs Eastern Michigan University student Joanna Brace at the Fayette Field School held June 17 to June 25. Instructors Steven Stier and Robbert McKay guided the students as they worked on the restoration of Building 3. Students replaced the deteriorated clapboard siding, repaired and reglazed the wood sash and laid floor joists in the rear addition. Alumni from the previous field schools returned for a work weekend and painted the

recently restored Building 7, which houses exhibits for children.



## Marking the 200<sup>th</sup> Birthdays

- Cross, Ed, Farm, 321 Teft Rd., 1/4 mile south of M-60, Spring Arbor
- Cleveland Park Pavilion, Cleveland Park, Rose City
- Groningen/Jan Rabbers, New Groningen Elementary School, 10542 Chicago Dr., Zeeland
- Harmonie Club/Germantown, Harmonie Park, across from the Harmonie Club at 267 E. Grand River, Detroit
- Haymarket Historic District, R.O.W. between 258 and 260 E. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo
- Hesler Log House, Lighthouse Park, Peninsula Township, Grand Traverse County
- Masonic Temple, 314 M.A.C., East Lansing
- New Groningen Cemetery/Groningen, 106th Ave. bet. Perry St. and Paw Paw Ave., Zeeland
- Oakwood Cemetery, 101 Oakwood Ave., Adrian
- Oscoda County Courthouse/Oscoda County, 311 S. Morenci Ave. (M-33), Mio
- St. John The Baptist Church, 324 S. Washington Ave., Hubbardston
- St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church, 23000 Gratiot, 2 blocks north of 9 Mile, Eastpointe
- The Strand/Theater District, 211-219 S. Washington Avenue, Lansing
- Temple Beth El/Congregation Beth El, 7400 Telegraph at 14 Mile, Bloomfield Hills
- University Of Michigania, Comerica Bank Parking Building, Bates and Larned, Detroit
- Utica Cemetery, 46235 Shelby Rd, bet. M-59 and 21 Mile, Utica
- Berkey and Gay Furniture Company Factory, 940 Monroe Ave., NW, Grand Rapids
- Camp Tosebo, 7228 Miller Rd., Onkama Twp., Manistee Co.
- Defer Elementary School, 15425 Kercheval, Grosse Pointe Park
- Erin-Warren Fractional District No. 2 Schoolhouse, 15500 Nine Mile Rd., Eastpointe
- Holly Union Depot, 223 S. Broad St., Holly
- Horton Bay School, 04991 Boyne City-Charlevoix Rd., Bay Twp., Charlevoix Co.
- Frederick A. and Caroline Hewett Kennedy Farm, 8490 Hanover Rd., Hanover Twp., Jackson Co.
- New Amsterdam Historic District, Amsterdam Ave., Burroughs St., and Cass Ave., Detroit
- Penniman Castle, 443 Main Street, Battle Creek
- Roethke Houses, 1759-1805 Gratiot Ave., Saginaw
- Scottville School, 209 N. Main St., Scottville, Mason Co.





# Preservation Profile

## Threatened

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced the intention to demolish the national register eligible **Veterans Administration Medical Center, Allen Park**. Significant in terms of architecture and medical history, the campus setting of Georgian Revival buildings is highlighted by the five story main building and its twin ten story towers – a landmark on the horizon of southeast Michigan. The facility was constructed in 1937 on land donated by Henry and Clara Ford with a stipulation that the land be returned to the Ford Motor Land Development Corporation if no longer used for VA purposes. Federal legislation passed in 2000 calls for the demolition of the buildings and return of the property to Ford. The VA will contribute \$14 million towards the demolition costs with Ford paying the estimated balance of \$7 million. Ford has not announced plans for the site.

The former **U.S. Coast Guard Station Harbor Beach** is the last remaining life saving station in the Great Lakes that was built on piers over the water. Abandoned after the construction of a new facility in 1987 and declared surplus in 1998, the national register eligible building has been offered to the city of Harbor Beach and for public sale, but the costs of stabilization and rehabilitation are high. Without a taker, the Coast Guard will soon demolish this building.

Plans were recently released for the alteration of the exterior **J. W. Knapp Company Building, Lansing**, as part of an office rehabilitation project. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the 1937 Knapp Building is one of the finest intact examples of a streamlined Art-Moderne-style commercial building in the Midwest. Built as a department store, it is remarkable for its size, the machine-like clarity of its design and its brilliant colors. If the project moves forward as planned, this landmark in the progress of the modern architecture movement in Michigan will be lost and unrecognizable.

The University of Michigan (UM) plans to sell **Gordon Hall, Dexter**, also known as the Samuel W. Dexter House. Built in 1841-43, Gordon Hall is one of Michigan's most imposing Greek Revival houses. Samuel Dexter was the founder of the Dexter community and a staunch and well-known abolitionist.

Katherine Dexter McCormick donated the property to the UM in 1950. While UM is working with the Washtenaw County to designate a portion of the property as a historic district protected by ordinance, there is disagreement about the extent of the 70-acre property to be protected from development.

## Rehabbed

Constructed in 1875, the **Peck Block in Grand Rapids** is a commercial block associated with several significant individuals and businesses. The building had undergone extensive changes including the 1950s addition of an aluminum skin and was threatened with demolition in the early 1990s. To prevent the loss of this significant community resource, the Kent County Council for Historic Preservation bought the building and remarketed it with the requirement that it be listed as a local historic district. The property was purchased by Rockford Construction in 1997 and is being rehabilitated as commercial and residential space. The project is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2001.

Constructed in the early 1900s as a horse delivery barn, **Allegan's Regent Theater** was converted to a theater in 1919 and featured both vaudeville and moving picture shows. During extensive renovations in 1935, the building was transformed into a stunning Art Deco movie house. In 1990 when the building was threatened with demolition to create a parking lot, citizens established "Old Regent Theater Company" (ORTC) to purchase and rehabilitate the theater. Through cooperative efforts between the ORTC and the city of Allegan, restoration was well underway when in June of 1997 torrential rains collapsed the building's roof. Since June 1997 the entire building has been restored to its Art Deco splendor. The Regent Theater reopened in September 2000 as a functioning community theater and movie house.

## Challenged

The former **Traverse City State Hospital**, a complex of some sixty-five buildings on a 500-acre site, was transferred out of state ownership in 1993. The property was transferred to the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation (GTCRC), the city of Traverse City

and Garfield Township. These agencies have been working collaboratively with the SHPO to return this site to a productive community service while retaining its historic character. To date, several cottages in the complex have been successfully rehabilitated. However, the future of several key buildings including Building 50 – the main hospital building – and the barn complex remain in question. The GTCRC recently signed an agreement with the Minervini Group, a local development company, to study a multi-use redevelopment plan for Building 50.

## Doin' the Right Thing

The **Main Street Oakland County** program recently celebrated its one-year anniversary as the first countywide Main Street Program in the United States to be affiliated with the National Main Street Center, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Oakland County has partnered with Lawrence Technological University to create a downtown design studio. Royal Oak, Walled Lake and Rochester were introduced into the program last year, and plans are to add more communities this fall.

**Ann Arbor's Old West Side Association** has proactively promoted the state tax credit program through workshops held in the neighborhood and information in their newsletter. As a result, the SHPO has received twelve applications for tax credit projects in the historic district. Successful projects range from exterior painting and masonry repair, to updated kitchens and bathrooms. Old West Side residents are rehabilitating their homes and saving money doing it.

In response to growing demand for affordable office space from community nonprofit human service providers, **Canton Township** embarked on a project to create new space on current township land to help address this need. A site in the Cherry Hill National Register Historic District was selected. Recognizing the importance and significance of the district, the Township is creating the Canton Human Services Center, a new facility that reflects the character of the district, maintains a traditional street presence and meets the needs of community human service providers.